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LONDON FOR NEA WATCHER
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SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION

11. SUMMARY: Editorials and commentaries in Oman's dailies focused on the negative effect of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's resignation and the U.S. elections on the peace process, and on violence between Palestinian groups. Articles in private daily "Al Watan" called Israel's negotiations with Palestinians a "public relations stunt" and commented that Hamas and Fatah infighting allows Israel to not deliver on its obligations. Government daily "Oman" accused Israel of undermining peace efforts with Iran through recent statements. END SUMMARY

"Israel is Trying to Stop Any Dialogue"

12. On August 3, government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) accused Israel of attempts to undermine progress on the Iranian nuclear issue. According to "Renouncing Violence to Further Peaceful Dialogue":

"The U.S. and EU eased their stance on the Iranian nuclear issue by giving diplomacy another chance. Iran claims it is ready for further dialogue, if such initiatives can lead to peaceful engagement on disputes. Whenever parties take the high road, though, Israel arrives to escalate the confrontation. Before the deadline for Iran's response (to the P5 + 1 proposal), the Israeli Prime Minister declared that Iran is in the process of achieving substantial progress in its nuclear program and that Iran will be able to produce uranium for military purposes in 2010. It is clear that Israel is trying to stop any dialogue that will lead to a peaceful settlement in the region. Israel persistently refuses to sign agreements that prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. It rejected cooperation with the IAEA, and it refuses to allow any party to inspect its nuclear facilities. And, perhaps the world remembers how Israel instigated America to invade Iraq by claiming that Iraq possessed nuclear weapons, accusations proved wrong after five years."

The U.S.-Israel "Public Relations Stunt"

13. On August 1, private Arabic daily "Al Watan" (circulation 42,000) said that Prime Minister Olmert's resignation and the U.S. elections will sabotage the Middle East peace process. "Israel: a Well of Never Ending Challenges" said:

"Given the resignation of the Israeli Prime Minister and the coming changes to the American administration, it is difficult to believe America's declaration that it will continue work towards a peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians. This is a repetitive scenario, one in which Israel renounces their obligations towards the peace process. Israel's propaganda claiming to move on with the peace process has been exposed as lies by the continued violence against the Palestinian people. These meetings organized

by the United States give the impression that peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis are just another public relations stunt."

"Israel Needs No Additional Excuses"

14. On August 4, "Al Watan" condemned inter-Palestinian violence, saying Israel now has justification to not deliver on its obligations to further peace efforts. According to "Palestinian Factions and the Self Destruction Dilemma":

"Confrontation erupted in the wake of a mysterious explosion in the Gaza Strip. Efforts after the blast should have been devoted to catching the perpetrators instead of igniting armed conflicts, which have resulted in scores of victims, including women and children. Israel needs no additional excuses to avoid delivering on its obligations to the Palestinians. Israel has withdrawn from commitments to release prisoners of war and they have begun planning for more settlements. All this means that Palestinians now have to face internal clashes along with Israeli threats to eat more of their lands and divide them with walls of isolation and racism."

GRAPPO